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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: "PRODUCE AND CONSERVE"
Department of Agriculture.

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Information from home economists of the U.S.
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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You've heard about packing thoughts in a nutshell. Well--2 words that pack a good deal of meaning about our supply of food are: produce and conserve. That's one way home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture sum up the home food situation.

The food that a family grows in one garden may not look impressive. But add up food on 6 million farms...and 12...or 15 million Victory Gardens in back yards and vacant lots. Do that, and you have a grand total of food for war needs and for home needs. The word "produce" means all that those gardens and farms stand for.

As for conserving, every homemaker can help make the food supply go farther and put the food she has to good use. If you are a homemaker, you are conserving when you plan balanced meals. You are conserving when you shop with your eyes open and buy foods that give good values in nutrition. And you're conserving when you unload a food basket in the kitchen and take care from then on that nothing goes to waste. You are conserving when you cook meals well, so the family gets all the good from food. And--you are conserving, of course, when you preserve food for the future.

Right now is the time to plan what you can do to produce food....and to conserve food.

Right now, this first week of March, rural women all over the country are hearing about a roll call. On farms, in villages, and in city suburbs the Department of Agriculture is asking women to stop and think--carefully--how

much food they will need for their families...for the year ahead. And then, the next step, of course, is to figure out, now, everything they can do to produce---and conserve---as much of the year's supply as they can.

City women are part of this roll call, too, the home economists point out. A city woman can answer for herself, even though there is no neighborhood leader tapping on her door to ask her to pledge her best efforts. For there will be many a city woman producing food in a Victory Garden this year. And every city woman belongs in the drive to conserve food.

So---city or country---now's the time to answer the nationwide call to be more self-sufficient. There's never been a time, since covered-wagon days, when families needed to "do for themselves" as they do today--when real American resourcefulness counts so much.

And now, just to see what women of our country are already doing, let's take a few wartime stories. These are some of the many stories that come to the Department of Agriculture in letters. They are from farm homes, and they show how rural women are producing and conserving food...and being self-reliant and resourceful.

Out in Nebraska one ingenious farm woman turned an old automobile into a hotbed for growing vegetables. She'd set her heart on a hotbed, so her Victory Garden could be bigger. And one day it dawned on her that the family's old jalopy, standing in the back yard, could be that hotbed. So, the horse dragged the car frame to the garden. And there it stands--a fine greenhouse, for there were big windows in the old car. A trap door in the roof provides ventilation. The glass started in protecting 400 young tomato plants--as its first Victory job--and it's already added richly to the family's supply of vitamin C.

And here's a story about a Texas woman. She doubled her home canned goods last season and found herself in a dilemma just the opposite of Old Mother Hubbard. For she hadn't enough cupboard shelves. But she tackled the job..... she built

the shelves herself. And in that connection, it's well worth remembering, the home economists say, that good storage is important when you want to conserve food. Your tinned foods need a place where it's dry to keep them from rust and spoiling. Glass jars of food need a dry place, too, and also a place that's cool and dark.

For another story, let's take this one from Down East. A Cape Cod homemaker invited three neighbors in and held a canning bee last season. They did so very well, that their canning bee was copied widely.

And in Iowa, homemakers in one county organized groups and named a telephone chairman for each group. When any woman had more of a vegetable or fruit crop than her family needed, she phoned the chairman to tell the good news. Any woman who needed help because her garden failed on some crop...well, she phoned that news in, too. All through the season those who "had" shared with those who lacked.

When a rural woman sets out to increase a poultry flock, she may think up ingenious ideas to solve problems. One North Dakota woman has turned a child's unused playhouse into a brooder for chicks.

And for a last story, I'd like to tell you about the South Carolina farm where an old jalopy is now a brooder. On this farm there's a family with four children and two pigs and an ambition to raise chickens so the family can have eggs and more meat. The mother, who tells the story, says they jacked up the old car. They took off the worn tires--to save rubber. And pushed blocks under the frame. They took out the seats and lined the car with pieces of advertising tin. To make it warm for the chicks, they set a small trash burner in an oil drum and installed it in the right front corner. A stove pipe was pushed through the car window--like a strange arm. There's a thermometer to keep tab on the warmth, and that jalopy has taken care of its first set of baby chicks in fine style. Out of 100 chicks, they lost only 4.

These are war stories, and there'll be many more.

